



26111 Antonio Parkway., P.O. Box 7005 Mission Viejo, CA 92690-7005 (949) 495-6400

April 18, 2024

To: Interested Parties

Subject: **NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR THE RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA RECYCLED WATER SYSTEM PROJECT**

The Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) is proposing to construct and operate new facilities to extend its existing recycled water service within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita and adjacent unincorporated County land. As the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), SMWD has prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that evaluates potential environmental effects of the proposed project.

Project Location: The project site is within various developed areas of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita and the unincorporated communities of Coto de Caza and Las Flores, within southeastern Orange County. One small project component is in the City of Mission Viejo. The project site is east of Interstate 5 and is bisected by State Route 241. See Figure 1, Project Location, for additional detail.

Project Description: The project proposes installation of approximately 95,000 linear feet (18 miles) of 8-inch- through 18-inch-diameter pipes. Most pipelines would run parallel to existing SMWD potable water pipelines beneath paved City and County roads within residential and commercial developments. Pipe installation would likely occur in four or five phases as the system's pressure zones are incorporated. A new aboveground reservoir tank would be constructed to store recycled water. The new tank is proposed in an undeveloped area on property owned by SMWD north of Los Alisos Boulevard and adjacent to an existing SMWD tank and pipelines. A new

pump station is proposed south of the Portola Reservoir on developed SMWD property. The existing Eastbrook Recycled Water Pump Station would be expanded to provide additional pumping capacity. The project would permanently convert an estimated approximately 4,000 acre-feet per year of residential and commercial irrigation demand from potable water to recycled water.

CEQA Public Review: The MND is being made available for public review for a period of 30 days beginning April 18, 2024, and concluding May 17, 2024. An electronic version of the MND may be viewed online at www.smwd.com.

Comments on the MND may be submitted via mail or email to:

Tricia Butler, Chief Engineer
Santa Margarita Water District
26111 Antonio Parkway
Rancho Santa Margarita, California 92688
Email: triciab@smwd.com

Comments provided by email should include "Rancho Santa Margarita Recycled Water System Project" in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email. **Comments on the MND must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., May 17, 2024.**

Project approval and adoption of the MND will be considered at a future SMWD Board of Directors hearing. All comments received related to issues in the MND will be included in the final package that is forwarded to the Board of Directors. Once a public hearing has been scheduled, the agenda for the meeting at which the project will be considered will be posted 72 hours prior to the meeting at the District offices and online at www.smwd.com.